

Fake News and Radio Biafra between 1967 and 1970 in Nigeria: A Lesson for the Contemporary Media Industry in South-South Region

Chukwuemeka Orlu, PhD.

Department of Sociology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State

Asor Confidence Asor

Department of Sociology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State
Asorcator2019@yahoo.com

Annotation: The Nigerian State was entangled with civil unrest following months of political instability in Nigeria and the massacres of Igbo people in the northern part of the country during the summer of 1966. On 30 May 1967, the Eastern Region (Biafra) unilaterally declared its independence, sparking a civil war that, combined with a tight economic blockade of the secessionist region and the logistical support of foreign powers, lasted three years and claimed the lives of more than three million people. The fight between Nigerian and Biafran soldiers lasted from 6 July 1967 to 12 January 1970, when Biafra surrendered. Throughout the struggle, notably between 1968 and 1969, the media from across the globe descended to Nigeria to cover it for their readers, with varying degrees of success. Despite constraints, Radio Biafra was able to chronicle the progress on the ground, the growing humanitarian disaster and rising fatalities, the armaments race and the political landscape, and ultimately accomplished their goal of raising international attention to Nigeria. This study, based on Radio Biafra, critically assessed the prevalence of fake news with unreliable sources contributing to the confusion and a proliferation of unreliable pieces of news in the contemporary Nigeria and the lessons for media houses operating in the South-South region.

Keywords: Fake News, Radio Biafra, Lessons, Contemporary Media Industry, South-South Nigeria.

Introduction

The development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) was one of the most important and greatest achievements that have brought great changes in the life of man (Omego and Nwachukwu, 2013). While Daramola (2012) described the radio as one of the most ubiquitous, the most effective and the cheapest and the cheapest media of communication available to man today, Omego and Nwachukwu (2013) averred that the habit of media consumers changed as people began to spend more time with the new novelty called Radio. The radio broadcast application consists of two formats: The Amplitude Modulation (AM) and Frequency Modulation (FM). The AM transmission varies with the wave while the FM transmission remains constant even when there are changes in the wave.

The advent of radio broadcast as a means of communicating to a scattered audience was an upgrade of latter forms of mass media. The oldest form was the print press which makes possible the dissemination of information through books, newspaper and magazines. The printing press on its part was an improvement from the face to face or interpersonal communication, which is the oldest form of communication. The development of radio system has many advantages some

of which are education, information and entertainment. In business, radio has been recognized as veritable tool for advertising and marketing. But radio has other uses which advertently can be put to negative use. Example of this is in disinformation, misinformation and propaganda. The negative value of radio was effectively used by the United States government during World War 1 and 11 as a psychological warfare weapon against the German (Moyes and Erskine, 1984, p. 75).

The phrase "fake news" comprises of two words: "fake," which denotes anything that is not real but is intended to be taken as true, and "news," which refers to current occurrences. As a result, fake news may be defined as information or news that is not legitimate but is presented and intended to be seen as true. Scholars have defined fake news in a number of ways, all with almost similar implications. According to Duffy et al. (2012), referenced in McGonagle (2017), fake news is when disinformation assumes the shape of a news item in order to approach the credibility that society associated with actual news. When defining the phrase "fake news," many academics concentrate on its motivations. McGonagle (2017) defines fake news as intentionally manufactured and distributed material with the purpose to deceive and mislead people into believing lies or rejecting verified truths. In this manner, misinformation is offered or likely regarded as news.

Modern communication technologies, like as radio, have played a revolutionary role in propaganda battles. It is crucial to governments and revolutionaries because to its ability to rapidly transmit messages across national lines. The Biafran leadership recognised the immense propaganda potential of radio and used it strategically. It must be mentioned that the Northern media also disseminated misinformation that sparked the Civil War. "Radio, television, and newspapers broadcast overt propaganda against Southerners and Easterners. Counter-propaganda sprang from the South, namely from radio and television stations in Enugu. This was overt propaganda intended to influence their respective constituencies. "Propaganda awoke dormant tensions between the North and South, the many linguistic groups and ethnic groupings, energising and mobilising them to war, supporting them throughout the conflict, and assisting in their rehabilitation after the war" (Davies, 1995, p. 21).

Even after the two world wars, the United States government through the Voice of America (VOA) still transmits American values under the guise of promoting the better understanding of the United States among people of the world and strengthens cooperative international relations. Similar of purpose is Radio Free Europe. Both broadcast target rival Russia and Eastern Europe (Moyes & Erskine, 1984). In Nigeria, Radio Biafra was an offshoot of the Eastern Nigeria Radio Corporation (ENRC) set up by the Eastern Nigeria government following secession from Nigeria in 1967. The Biafran government recognized the value of radio as a tool to achieve an end. The then governor of Eastern Nigeria, Lt. Col Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu used the ENRC to announce the secession of Eastern Nigeria and the establishment of the state of Biafra. It is argued that the secession of Eastern Nigeria was an intense media event which foundation was laid in the first military coup d'état of 1966.

From this trusted point, Radio Biafran acted as the mouth piece of government and often filling the gap where there was no government official to direct the affairs of the state. Even after the government was moved to Aba, Owerri, and Umuahia respectively as the war progressed, the existence of Biafra was basically sustained through the media, particularly radio. This was done to maintain the morale of the Biafran army and citizenry, as well as to maintain the sympathy of the international community. When the capital, Enugu, was sacked, the existence of Biafra was basically sustained through the radio (Davies, 1995, p. 21). Luke Uka Uche, in an article titled "Radio Biafra and the Nigeria Civil War: Study of War Propaganda on a Target Audience," which was quoted by Davies (1995), said that throughout the civil war, Radio Biafra was literally perceived as the Biafran Government itself. Davies (1995) noted this statement. According to him, even after the leadership of the Biafran government had evacuated the enclave before to the conclusion of the war, the populace continued to have faith in the idea of Biafra since the identification for the Biafran radio station was still "This is Radio Biafra Enugu." He came to the

conclusion that the thirty-month conflict was officially over when Radio Biafra was finally silenced. This occurrence prompted him to reach this conclusion. People started to have faith that the conflict had finally come to an end (Davies, 1995, p. 21).

The propaganda accurately portrayed the reality of the situation in Biafra, which was that the nation had been reduced to a mostly one-ethnic enclave. In order to keep the Igbo population fighting, the Directorate for Propaganda decided to concentrate their efforts only on sustaining the Igbo's resolve to resist, even though the civilian population was enduring ever-increasing agony. The Igbo were the driving force behind Biafran secession, and they were now the only people left. The mission of the propagandists working for the Biafran government was to maintain a populace that was prepared to suffer and to persuade that people that the only other option was destruction. The people were subjected to harsh repercussions as a result of the propaganda, which ultimately led to a significant loss of life and property. No significant lessons have been drawn from the impact that radio propaganda or false news had on the Nigerian-Biafran war, despite the enormous casualties that were incurred as a direct consequence of the propaganda and counterpropaganda that occurred throughout the conflict. Because of this, the focus of our study is on the modern day.

Research interest has grown in recent years due to the significant effect that fake news has on democratic processes (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). In point of fact, previous research has demonstrated that there are numerous negative repercussions of false news. It was discovered that spreading bogus news further polarises cultures that are already split (Vargo et al., 2018). For instance, in Nigeria, Sadiku (2018) claimed that in June 2018, approximately 86 individuals were brutally murdered in 11 villages in the Barkin Ladi, Rirom, and Jos South Local Government areas of Plateau state as revenge by the Miyetti Allah group. These settlements are situated in Plateau state's Barkin Ladi, Rirom, and Jos South Local Government districts. On the other hand, a recent investigation demonstrated that the murders were not connected in any way to the Miyetti Allah organisation. By that point, the circulation of false news articles connected to the massacres was responsible for more fatalities in the state of Plateau in Nigeria. Similar investigation that was carried out in the United States discovered that in 2016, there was a supposed "Pizza Gate conspiracy theory" that was released party. During the time that the US presidential election was taking place, emails belonging to the Democratic National Party were leaked online. This led to rumours that the hacked emails contained a vague reference to paedophilia and human trafficking, with particular attention paid to the family that owned a pizza restaurant in the Washington, DC area; however, there is no solid evidence to support these rumours (Barthel et al., 2016).

Threats to national security may be found in many different regions of Nigeria, making it a country that is plagued by political and social unrest. In the post-truth age, in which a predilection for false information is on the increase, these risks emerge as many wars, pervasive and systemic corruption, crippling poverty, weak institutions, threats of secession, and perceived marginalisation, anger, hate, and economic hardships. All of these things take place in an environment that is characterised by a post-truth era (Harsin, 2018). These concerns are undermining relationships in an aggressive, progressive, and unrelenting manner, escalating animosities across groups, and posing a danger to the continued existence of democracy in the nation (Pate, 2018). It might be argued that all of these things are made easier by the revolution in information and communication technology (ICT), which has democratised and simplified access to information and made it easier for it to be disseminated in different locations and times (Ibrahim & Adamu, 2016; Pate & Idris, 2017).

This has not only moved and weakened responsibility for these messages, but it has also influenced the delivery and form of political communication as well as the diffusion of political ideas in our democratic system. For example, what was formerly known as "yellow journalism" and "character assassination/slander" is now recognised as "fake news" and "fraudulent news"; these are terms that seem "big" and predict severe societal consequences. The impact of modern technology has led to the spread of these expressions (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018;

Agbese, 2017 December 31). According to what Egan said (online, December 11, 2018) "Online, lies and the truth seem identical. This has proved to be a boon for professional liars, who use these platforms to sell falsehood, as vehicles for personal celebrity, and as a means to spread misinformation ". Concerns have been made as a result of these factors about the fact that Nigerians have continual and growing access to material that is either erroneous or misleading without any kind of verification (gatekeeping) or verifiable credit (Agbese, 2017; Hankey, Marrison, & Naik, 2018).

The most important question to pose is, how can politics help regulations to encourage the development and longevity of our democratic system while maintaining its legitimacy to embrace internet-based and social media platforms? In a multiethnic nation like Nigeria, how can the democratic process' integrity and principles be promoted? This article focuses on the recent phenomenon of false news as well as the new political period of post-truth, as well as the possible implications these phenomena may have on the South-South area of Nigeria. In the closing parts, recommendations are provided for reducing the harmful impacts of false news and post-truth political situations in society. These sections are included at the conclusion of the report.

Operationalization of Concepts

For a proper understanding of the concept used in this study, the following concepts shall be defined as follows:

Radio: It is the transmission and reception of electromagnetic waves of frequency especially the ones that entail sound messages. For the purpose of this study, radio can also mean the activity surrounding the transmission of sound to the public. A radio is an audio device that can communicate with a large number of people at once. The transmission of information using electromagnetic waves is an integral part of the radio process. To put it another way, the sound might be sent and received by these waves (Sambe, 2008, p. 75). According to Shaibu (2005, page 1), the technique of transmitting and receiving signals over the air by using electromagnetic waves is what the name "radio" refers to. It is also about the process of broadcasting programmes for the purpose of individuals listening to such programmes when they are being aired.

Fake News: The words that are used in the fields of psychological operations and information warfare have evolved in response to changes in the strategic environment of how perceptions are formed. Fake news was given considerable currency throughout Mr. Trump's during his presidential campaign (2016). (2016). Because he said it so often, it eventually became one of his most famous statements, both orally and on twitter. So much so that it was named the word of the year for 2017. Fake news was defined by Axel Gelfert as "the purposeful presenting of (usually) incorrect or misleading assertions as news, when the statements are intended to be deceptive."

Civil War: For the sake of this study, this simply means strife between citizens of the same country. It also means a war in which citizenry of a country seeks to overthrow or replace the government over them. In this study, the researcher is interested in the civil war between separatist Biafra groups against Nigeria that occurred in 1967-1970.

Propaganda: There are several definitions of propaganda but for the purpose of this research, propaganda could mean a piece of information is used primarily to influence an audience and promote an agenda. In most cases, the language used in spreading propaganda is often presented in an emotional rather than rational way in order to capture the interest of listeners. In electioneering process and during wars, propaganda is used as important instrument of promoting a particular group interest. There are several definitions of the word propaganda, and each meaning is as unique as the people and institutions that define the subject matter, and each definition is dictated by the context in which the phrase is used. To achieve certain territorial/national goals, including the defence of a country's territorial integrity, a justification to go to war, or to respond to the perceived advances by actual or equally imagined

aggressor/enemy, the military knows and approaches propaganda," says Ngoa (2011, p. 239).

Biafra: Is a region in South East of Nigeria that seceded as an independent country in 1967-1970 during the civil war period but was later defeated by the government forces of Nigeria.

Media Industry: The cinema, publishing, broadcasting, and television sectors make up the media business. It also include motion pictures, television shows and radio broadcasts, as well as news, music, periodicals, newspapers, and books.

Theoretical Framework

As a means of providing a theoretical basis for the investigation, the Framing and Agenda Setting theories were used. According to Goffman's framing theory, which was developed in 1974, the media selectively spotlight some aspects of an event or problem while minimising the significance of others, which causes the public to place a greater emphasis on the aspects that are highlighted (Chong, 2007). The term "framing" is being used here to indicate how a certain description of a problem is being promoted by the mainstream media via the processes of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2010). According to Matthes (2011), the term "framing" refers to the activity of actively constructing, choosing, and forming the frames.

There are several different bodies of writing on the subject of framing theory (Entman, 1993; Callaghan, 2005; Gamson, 1992; Kuypers, 2002). It is essential to keep in mind that journalists create metaphorical picture frames around the ever-moving subject of events and activities. In doing so, they direct attention on certain topics, ideas, and people while masking what is located outside the frame (Boykoff, 2011). According to (Lawrence, 2000), news frames are noteworthy because they represent an exercise of journalistic power (either intentionally or, very frequently, unintentionally). Frames may focus attention toward and bestow legitimacy onto some parts of reality while marginalising other aspects. In most contexts, "to create frames" refers to the finished product of the framing process. The examination of how events are covered and presented in the media may be improved via the use of framing (Entman, 1993).

Evidence from earlier studies has shown that the mass media have the ability to pick and package events, and therefore, the ability to alter how consumers perceive the surrounding reality. The idea of framing is one of the media effects theories, and it is widely used to investigate how the information presented in the mass media is filtered, and how this, in turn, influences how the general public responds to a wide variety of outside stimuli (Matthes, 2011). Azlan (2012), in one of his studies on framing, evaluated how public views are influenced as a consequence of the media's framing of a topic. His research was published in the journal Communication Research. "the accessibility of an issue and the link between a topic and the audience's pre-existing ideas," as he puts it, are two of the variables that, according to him, are responsible for the ease with which frames are adopted. According to the findings shown above, the effects of framing are not independent (Azlan, 2012). In addition, Shuck and De Vreese (2006) have shown that the attitudes and information that a person already has prior to their exposure to the media have a significant impact in determining the consequences of framing. Because this research focuses on how Radio Biafra utilises frames to emphasise and impact listeners' comprehension of and attitudes towards the Nigerian Civil War, the usage of framing theory as an anchor to this study becomes required because it focuses on how Radio Biafra uses frames to do so.

On the other hand, the Agenda Setting hypothesis contends that what is eventually seen as relevant is determined by the selection of news and other information that is made accessible to the public by those responsible for making decisions about the media. According to this idea, there is a direct relationship between the amount of significance that is given to problems in the media and the priorities that are held by the general population (Weaver, McCombs & Shaw, 2004). The issue that has to be asked by scholars at this point is how the establishing of agendas effects the significance that is later ascribed to the pictures and events that are portrayed by the

media. According to the findings of Weaver, Shaw, and McCombs (2004), "Agenda setting refers to the capacity that the media have to not only represent reality but also decide reality." The level of attention paid by the media to a given issue is a good indicator of how seriously that matter is taken by the public. For example, if the news media "report" violent crime widely, there is a greater likelihood that members of the general public and those who influence policy would react appropriately with worries of being victims themselves (Weaver, McCombs and Shaw, 2004).

The function that is performed by the mass communication media in the process of defining the significant topics and images to which the public responds is known as agenda-setting. The purpose of this method is to draw the attention of media professionals, the general public, and those responsible for determining public policy. The study conducted in the field of communications demonstrates that the news media are the most significant actors in agenda-setting (Gonzalez, 2013). A news story will set the agenda for how the public will react, as assessed by public opinion surveys, and how legislators will respond, via the enactment of legislation. In respect to the current investigation, it is made abundantly evident that the several efforts and frames Radio Biafra has used in its programming amounts to establishing agenda for the listeners, who have played it out by participating in a number of demonstrations.

Radio Biafra: The Consequence of Propaganda on the War

The Nigerian–Biafran conflict, which took place between 1967 and 1970, is the event that may be traced back to the beginning of Radio Biafra's existence. From the 30th of May 1967 until the 15th of January 1970, the Bight of Biafra served as the inspiration for the name of the official radio station of the Biafran Republic, which was known as Radio Biafra (the Atlantic bay to its south). The majority of the people that lived there were of the Igbo ethnic group; they were also the ones who spearheaded the secession, which was brought on by economic, ethnic, cultural, and religious difficulties amongst the different peoples of Nigeria. On May 30, 1967, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, who was serving as the military governor of the Eastern Regions at the time, made the announcement that the Republic of Biafra had declared its independence. He cited the killing of Easterners in the post-coup violence as a primary reason for the break up of the country. Because oil played such a significant role in the economy of Nigeria, the presence of a big quantity of the resource in the area contributed to the outbreak of violence. (Minahan, 2002)

Additionally, Nkpa (1977) notes that "The radio, newspapers, and government announcements lacked significant credibility, and the average Biafran could not distinguish between radio broadcasts and official statements. " Therefore, "transistor radios, which were possessed by a large number of young men, were very valuable to both literates and illiterates, since those who could not hear English broadcasts could understand those in vernacular" (Nkpa). He said that "the two originated from the same source, the radio, and were considered to be the same thing" (1977, p. 4). According to Nkpa, (1977) suspicion of newspapers and radio broadcasts began even before the onset of hostilities" because "politicians often utilised these means to make unfulfilled promises to the people (334).

Radio Biafra, often referred to as the Voice of Biafra, is a radio station that was founded by the government of the now-defunct Republic of Biafra. The station is also known by its former name. The radio station played major role in galvanizing the people towards the war through its broadcast of speeches and propaganda. During the war era, there was mixed feelings about the activities of the radio. Some viewed the broadcast of the radio as incitement to war while on the other hand, some saw the activities of the radio as source of information for preservation and hope. Omaka (2017) stated that radio as a form of modern day communication technology has played a revolutionary role in propaganda wars. She noted that government and most revolutionaries find the radio as one indispensable instrument in disseminating information quickly across to people beyond national border. The paper argues that despite the underestimation of the role of Radio Biafra in the war, it is no gainsaying to say that the radio

sustained the support and loyalty and also created a community spirit that encouraged the confidence of the people during the war (Omaka, 2017).

When researching Biafran propaganda for internal consumption, it is always vital to keep in mind that up to 70 percent of the Biafran populace was illiterate and was only minimally exposed to the written propaganda. This is something that must be kept in mind at all times. However, even this brief introduction to Biafran radio propaganda and, more importantly, the methods used by Biafran censors to maintain quality control in the propaganda techniques they used, gives us several insights into the mentality sought by the Biafran government for the majority of its population, despite the fact that the majority of the preserved material requires us to prioritise the written word. This was despite the fact that the mission of the propaganda arm was to continue to encourage people to fight. The plight of the Igbo eventually became synonymous with that of Biafra, to the point that it was no longer necessary to describe the situation in religious terms.

The propaganda accurately portrayed the reality of the situation in Biafra, which was that the nation had been reduced to a mostly one-ethnic enclave. The only people left in the fledgling republic were the Igbo, who had been the driving force behind Biafran secession. The Directorate for Propaganda's mission was to maintain the Igbo people's resolve to resist despite the mounting suffering of the civilian population, despite the numerous setbacks. It was the Igbo who were the driving force behind Biafran independence, and they were the only ones remaining. The mission of the propagandists working for the Biafran government was to maintain a populace that was prepared to suffer and to persuade that people that the only other option was destruction. When the Biafrans moved outside of their native country, they encountered a very different set of difficulties than those they had experienced before. The goal of the government's internal propaganda was to maintain the population's willingness to fight, suffer, and die for the war effort. The construction of propaganda required a message that could be updated quickly and tailored to the internal conditions of the country. Biafran propaganda was faced with the difficulty of permeating the global system in sections of the world where the war's day-to-day operations were distant and obscure. Despite the fact that the Biafran message was very direct and intended to elicit sympathy and action that would translate into public pressure on world governments to advocate for Biafran sovereignty or, at the very least, a political solution favourable to Biafran aspirations of self-determination, the Biafrans hoped that their message would elicit this sympathy and action. This would translate into public pressure on world governments to advocate for Biafran sovereignty or, at the very least, a political solution favourable to Biafra

The murderous nature of Nigeria's blockade of Biafra was the one feature of the Nigerian siege of Biafra that was consistently brought up in both domestic and international propaganda campaigns. This thread's purpose inside Biafra was to inspire a population that was under siege to continue fighting until the ultimate end. However, the objective of Biafran propaganda overseas was to escalate the war on a global scale and persuade the Gowon administration to acknowledge Biafra's right to self-rule. In order to accomplish this goal, the government of Biafra rallied support from the people all over the world by spreading the idea that Nigerian forces were engaged in a genocide campaign against the Igbo. Images of the Igbo atrocities that took place in 1966 were utilised to great advantage in the propaganda that was sent outside of the country. In addition, photos of Biafran youngsters showing their bloated stomachs as a result of hunger gave the issue an urgency that could not be ignored and made it impossible to ignore. During the war particularly in 1967-1970, the media reports of the humanitarian crisis in Biafra, the brutality of the conflict and the sheer amount of media attention sparked international public outrage on what was humanitarian disaster. To this day, the debate on the war is that the media was the defining moment in the Nigeria Civil War. While Nigeria declared the end of the conflict as "no victor no vanquish", commentators posit the media won and lost the war. Much as radio broadcast is a veritable process in mass communication, the medium is fraught with some problems.

Radio can be used at the detriment of the society by propagating disinformation and fake news. Critics of the war posit that they have no war had the media behaved responsibly. They pointed to reports by the Northern media that the first coup d'état was carried out by the East against the North led to the killings of many easterners. So too that those killed were Moslems whom Christians were after. On the other hand, Doron (2011) reported many cases of fake new which were aired by Biafra Radio to galvanize support from the world to the humiliation against the Igbos.

Selecting the best program to fill the broadcast airtime depends largely on the broadcast personnel's understanding of the nature of the medium on the one hand and the understanding of what the target audience wants on the other hand. Understanding the nature of the medium implies taking note of the characteristics of the medium and taking full advantage of the medium's potentials to fulfill the expectations of the target audience. It also means taking cognizance of the shortcomings of the station in your script so as to be able to create an unforgettable message that will help you achieve the desired goals of the program. But on the contrary, Radio Biafra did not take into consideration the knowledge gap of the audience it transmits its broadcast to. It treated them equally, believing that all would have the same understanding of its message. Biafra being a heterogeneous society made up of both literates and illiterates cause a problem to the enclave. The media hype on the killing of Easterners led Col. Ojukwu and many Easterners to feel that they were no longer safe in Nigeria, leading to secession of Eastern Nigeria.

According to Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso (2008), media messages are a potent stimulant capable of eliciting quick and predictable responses from the audience. Studies have shown that the media audiences are active and not passive. Scholars such as Elihu Katz, Jay Blummer, and Michael Gurevitch demonstrated in their work on media uses and gratification that people are not merely passive recipients of messages. This is because they "selectively choose, attend to, perceive, and retain the media messages based on their needs, beliefs, etc." Propaganda messages transmitted via radio transmission have the potential to exacerbate a deplorable situation if they are not properly managed. Anaeto et al. (2008) agreed that radio houses must take into cognizance the source of the fact and the impact it would have on the society and this has been the bane of social disorder in Nigeria since independence.

According to Iruonagbe et al. (2013), one of the primary functions of the media is to constantly defend the people and advocate their ambitions. This is one of the most important responsibilities that the media plays. However, it is also susceptible to being exploited in order to suit purposes that may turn out to be counterproductive. This manipulation of the media via ownership control contributed most significantly to the ongoing ethnic conflict in Nigeria since it resulted in the media engaging in different forms of ethnic politics at various points in time. The kind of power politics that are experienced in Nigeria have the implication that the media frequently finds itself in a very vulnerable situation, particularly during times of sociopolitical transition. As a result, the lives of journalists are frequently put in grave danger, and sometimes a lot of compromises are made, including corrupt practises, all of which undermine the professionalism of the media. According to Daramola (2013), the mainstream media has been responsible for inciting violence on occasion via biased reporting, purposeful distortions, criminal partisanship, unprofessionalism, and unprofessionalism that is further complicated by the effects of tribalism.

Fake News and Contemporary Nigeria

In contemporary times, the problem has been compounded by hate speech, fake news, incitement to religious and ethnic sentiments and other ills in the media industry which is largely unregulated in Nigeria. With the advent of the internet broadcasting and social media, the challenge exists with the new means of communication and the new media that disseminate uncensored information via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other website sources to the public in real time. More so, when the new media infrastructure is cheap, accessible and easy to deploy and as such the radio and newspapers run by expensive infrastructure may find it difficult to

compete.

As was just noted, Donald Trump popularised the term "fake news" and made it a common part of ordinary language. He would dismiss as fabricated news any claim levelled against him by his political adversaries. After he was sworn in as President of the United States, he did not stop using the phrase "fake news" in reference to matters pertaining to foreign affairs. During the course of Donald Trump's election campaign, his team was able to get a sense of the general public's perspective with the help of the data collected by Cambridge Analytica. This information was obtained by gathering the individual preferences of voters from various social media platforms such as Google, Snapchat, Twitter, and Facebook. In the months preceding up to the elections, intensive survey research, data modelling, and performance optimising algorithms were employed to target a total of 10,000 advertisements at a variety of diverse audiences. In order to form valid views, these advertisements were seen billions of times. Trump campaigned on the slogan "America First" and made an appeal to white supremacists to vote for him after the two terms of Barack Obama's presidency, who was the first black president of the United States of America. Despite having a negative image as a person, Trump, an improbable candidate, was able to accurately detect the mood of the people, which led to his victory in the elections.

The phrase "fake news" has been in use in this nation for quite some time. Simply put, the addition of the pejorative adjective "fakes" to the word "news" amplifies the degree to which the impact of the phrase is felt by its audience. Simply expressed, the news is a report of what really took place. The significance that is placed on news lends credence to the idea that it represents the truth. However, given that we are living in an age of post-truth and that Nigeria is a country that has spent years living a life devoid of truth, "the two essentially conflicting concepts might inhabit the same textual space" (Abdullahi, 2017). Recently, the BBC conducted interviews with a variety of Nigerian specialists to get their thoughts on the most significant problems facing humanity in the 21st century. According to many of them, the lack of reputable information sources is one of the most critical difficulties that Nigerians, and indeed people everywhere, are now experiencing.

In a similar development, Professor Umaru Pate has criticized the Nigerian media, namely the television media, for allocating a bigger proportion of their news, reports, and programs to political issues. Itedge News (2018) claimed that he had said the following on this event: "Feast on hatred and incitements.... Everything political is news, but burning issues poverty and violent conflicts do not appear to bother us." This is not what one wants. The researcher went on to suggest that "lack of patriotism, ethnic and religious intolerance, political ties, and foreign interests" in the country were to blame for the increase in the circulation of fake news. He said this in the following way: "lack of patriotism, ethnic and religious intolerance, political ties, and foreign interests" in the country.

According to an article published by Itedge News, Dr. Igomu Onoja, the Zonal Director of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for the North-Central zone of Nigeria argued that "it [is] part of media ethics to make sure balanced reporting and give all parties equal hearing" and that journalists should avoid doing journalism that could spread fake news that could hurt the democratic process in Nigeria. Dr. Onoja provides an example of incorrect information that was propagated by a media outlet in Jos, which is situated in the Plateau state in the north central area of Nigeria. He said, "We have radio stations in Jos applauding for those who claim the governor of Plateau is mentally ill" (Itedge News, 2018).

Post-truth reality denotes that the truth has become relative; facts have alternatives; and news is weaponized, a phenomenon that Nigeria's Information and Culture Minister, Lai Mohammed, described it as the greatest threat to democracy and security as it played a role in the civil war in the country, (Abdullahi (2017)). Post-truth reality also denotes that the truth has become relative; facts have alternatives; and news is weaponized. Additionally, the Federal Government of Nigeria, recognising the risks of false news, began a nationwide campaign against fake news on

July 12, 2018, with the goal of enlightening Nigerians and combating its prevalence. This effort is called "Fight Fake News." False news is immoral, damaging, provocative, and subversive to the peace and society tranquilly, especially in a multicultural setting like Nigeria, since it increases tension and fosters fear and mistrust among people. In addition, it is subversive to the peace and society tranquilly. In addition, the dissemination of false news is disruptive to the harmony that exists throughout society. The Minister of Information issued a warning not too long ago that the spread of fake news had the ability to "threaten and destroy" the country (Abdullahi, 2017).

According to Nigeria's 1999 constitution, the press, radio, television, and other mass media organisations must always be free to promote the fundamental aims established in the constitution and preserve the government's responsibility and accountability to the people (Pate and Idris's 2017). According to Abdullahi (2017), the provisions of Section 39 of the Constitution of 1999 state as follows: (i) I every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart ideas and information without interference; (ii) without prejudice to the generality of Subsection (1) of this Section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish, and operate a medium for the dissemination of information, ideas, and opinions; and (iii) without prejudice to the generality of Subsection (1)

The democratic transition was taken into consideration while writing the constitution, which helped to ensure its success. Both freedom of speech and freedom of the press are seen as important constituents of the democratic system that we have established in our constitution. People are able to make educated judgments and choices, which is essential to the health of a democracy, when they have unfettered access to authentic and accurate information on the problems and concerns that are relevant to them (Oro, 2011; Epstein, 2011). Therefore, the consequences of false news and "alternative facts" are directly attacking the core principles and practise of democracy as they continue to escalate. This is due to the fact that despite the fact that Section 39 of the Constitution guarantees an individual's right to freely hold and disseminate ideas, information, and views without interference, "interference is precisely what fake news does," as Abdullahi (2017, March 13, online) points out. In point of fact, since it competes for space and tries to be accepted alongside real information and news, fake news denies individuals their constitutionally protected freedom to have views, as well as the right to receive and communicate ideas and information (Abdullahi, 2017 March 13; Oro, 2011; Pate, 2018 September 7).

The proliferation of alternative facts, which are frequently presented alongside genuine information, might make it difficult for individuals to differentiate between true and false statements. People are unable to build common meanings in dialogues when they are unclear about what constitutes the truth or authentic information. This makes it far more challenging for individuals to keep their political officials accountable for the stewardships they perform. Information and Democracy Commission) (IDC, 2018) states that 'the right to know is threatened by political control of the media, the subordination of news and information to private interests, the growing influence of corporate actors who avoid democratic control, the dissemination of false information on the internet in large numbers, violence against journalists and editors, and the undermining of quality journalism' (p. 3).

According to Pate (2018), the following are some of the most significant impacts that fake news can have on society: (a) fake news can undermine the unity and peace of the country with explosive consequences; (b) by its very nature, democracy appears adversarial, but fake news makes it worse; (c) fake news can exacerbate distrust, division, and violence in the already divided diverse polity; and (e) fake news can promote the spread of misinformation.

Lessons for the Contemporary Media Industry in South-South Nigeria

The Africa Research Bulletin is still the primary source for Radio Biafra transcripts, despite the fact that the publication published the majority of the reporting regardless of the veracity of the sources or the reliability of the information. This is because the publication is located in close

proximity to actual events that take place within the territory of Biafra. However, the majority of news organisations employed reporters who checked the credibility of their sources before publishing their stories. In spite of the fact that several news organisations like the BBC and Agence France-Presse had correspondents stationed in both Nigeria and Biafra, it was sometimes impossible to verify even the most basic information about the events that were taking place. Ugochukwu looked into one incident in which the Nigerian Air Force was responsible for bringing down a jet carrying Swedish Red Cross volunteers. Ugochukwu provided the information that it took more than a week after the event had transpired to determine the specific conditions that prevailed during the occurrence. France-Inter, the news radio station of Radio France, stated that three planes were missing on the day of the event, while the BBC reported that the plane was brought down by anti-aircraft fire.

According to our examination of previous research, the dissemination of false news in Nigeria has resulted in the loss of life, the development of conflicts, political animosity, and social fear in the South-South area. As a result, individual, contextual, and cultural incentives, in addition to trust within networks, all contribute to the propagation of false news among Nigerians. In spite of the negative effects of spreading false news, there is still a lack of understanding about fake news in the context of Nigeria. Users have not been effectively educated about the implications of false news and the reasons why it is necessary to be self-aware before transmitting any message, despite awareness campaigns' best efforts to do so. It is essential to highlight the fact that a broad variety of solutions have been created, with the intention of combating the spread of false news. The use of algorithms and other machine-based methods to assist people in distinguishing between authentic and false news has often been the primary emphasis (Khan & Idris, 2019).

On the other side, it has been shown that this strategy is ineffective (Khan & Idris, 2019). In general, past research has demonstrated that the inability of consumers to distinguish between facts and views is one of the most important elements contributing to their increased consumption of false news. This is one of the most major reasons contributing to an increase in consumer consumption of bogus news. According to a number of studies, users of social media platforms are required to use their own discretion in evaluating the veracity of the material they find online and determining whether or not to disclose it to other people. As a result, having sufficient knowledge, awareness, and the capacity to quickly recognise fake news might assist users in reducing their propensity to share false information. Due to the fact that people play an essential part in combating disinformation, it is possible that social media platforms, which are homes to fake news, may not be able to survive if users do not stop creating false material and distributing it (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). As a result, the significance of the awareness campaign against false news cannot be underlined enough. Hence, we contextualize the lessons for contemporary media houses operating in the South-South region of Nigeria. Media, particularly radio broadcasting, occupies a very important place in society's growth; this is because radio broadcasting is considered the medium that covers vast territory and penetrates a nation's nooks and crannies. According to findings in Nasidi (2016), most people in Northern Nigeria are easily accessible via radio, and radio has become one of politicians' most effective instrument of propaganda.

One of the factors that led to the war was the hate and dangerous messages spread by media houses especially Biafran Radio. Properties and more than 1 million lives were lost in the Civil War that lasted for thirty (30) months (1967-1970). The Nigerian political atmosphere is bedeviled with hate speeches, inciting statements and political propaganda. This has shown that Nigeria and the political elites are yet to learn from the impact of the media on the Civil War. It is therefore important for the governments in the South-South region to check the activities of mischief makers who are bent on causing fragmentation in the region and the country for their selfish interest.

Another issue of serious concern observed in the paper is the problem of ethnic sentiments in media broadcasting. The Biafra Radio was used to incite the people of then Eastern Nigeria

against other part of the country. Given this, the onus is on media houses in South-South Nigeria to desist from determining what is aired in the Media especially during political activities in the country. Responsible journalism is such that is devoid of contents that are capable of heating the polity and the general society. The media in the South-South region must be responsible to air the true position of facts and desist from inaccuracies, distortions, conflict, confusion and errors of facts in their reports.

Doron's analysis (2011, p. 140) had earlier contextualize some of the consequences of fake news on the war and the implications on contemporary Nigeria. Doron reported that the tragedy of "one death at your door is ten deaths in the neighboring country and tens of thousands of deaths in Africa" was the main propaganda from Radio Biafra. International agencies have slowly used Radio Biafra or any Biafran outlet as an authoritative voice. Several times, Biafran sources cited military victories when none occurred, as in February 1968 when Biafran forces announced Nsukka's recapture. It is therefore imperative for the South-South region to identify the antics of mischief makers, especially outlaw groups wearing the helmet of freedom fighters. The question

Conclusion

The potential solutions to the problem of misinformation, often known as false news, and the effects it has caused need to be investigated from a variety of different angles. The undermining effects of false news in this age of post-truth make this topic more difficult to tackle when we are already grappling with the nuanced politics of various identities, including those of race, religion, and regionalism. Because individuals continually create, share, and promote information that highlights those fault lines, it will be very difficult for our society to generate a feeling of national cohesiveness as long as these behaviours continue. Without this, it would be impossible to establish a consensus around those essential concerns that would propel our growth as a country. This would make the development of a consensus around those fundamental issues impossible. It is not the "false" information itself that poses a threat posed by misinformation; rather, it is the actions that individuals do in response to the disinformation that causes problems for them. Words have been the source of every dispute throughout history, both in terms of what individuals say to themselves and what they say to other individuals (Abdullahi, 2017 March 13; Agbese, 2017; Aminu, 2018; Ansip, 2017; Kazeem, 2018; Pate & Idris, 2017). As citizens, we each have the ability to make a decision to refrain from creating, encouraging, or sharing any material that is phoney, fraudulent, or otherwise dishonest in our various spheres of influence. It's possible that this won't "post-truthfully" address all of our issues, but it might if people, both individually and collectively, choose to focus on being part of the solution rather than the problem. It is possible that post-truth has been lingering over our society, but it is something that can be eradicated with the help of robust laws, regulations, and public engagement. The government formulates regulations with a legal basis, which should allow for public participation in the anti-fake news or anti-post-truth-effect campaign in order to purge the Nigerian polity of these anti-social and anti-political influences.

Recommendations

There is still a significant problem with the level of media literacy in Nigeria, particularly in the South-South region of the country. It should come as no surprise that there is a need for more media literacy among the general population, particularly among young people, in order to equip them with the ability to access and react critically to messages presented by various forms of media. It is in the best interest of contemporary media sources to lead an aggressive media literacy campaign in order to educate the general public about the implications of ingesting fake news. This may be accomplished by educating people about the importance of media literacy. There should be a sufficient amount of advertisements, workshops, jingles on television and radio, and other sensitization strategies such as posters and flyers on print and social media as part of the strategy to increase the general public's awareness in order to combat the circulation of fake news. This will be necessary in order to combat the circulation of fake news. All of this need to be carried out in accordance with the approach.

As a second point of consideration, users of social media platforms in Nigeria need to be incentivized to verify the veracity of the information they get before passing it on to others. This can be accomplished by taking into consideration the source of the information, reading beyond the headlines, confirming the authors, conducting in-depth research on news articles by checking the dates, investigating the evidence to confirm sufficient facts and figures, verifying fake images, searching for additional sources, and consulting experts when there is uncertainty. Undoubtedly, the first line of defence against the spread of false information is a discerning and well-informed public that is capable of recognising instances of false news when it is presented to them.

As a third priority, there need to be an emphasis placed on raising knowledge of the dangers presented by false news, more especially raising awareness of the importance of responsible information production and transmission. It is imperative that attempts be made to educate the general people on the need of practising responsible information creation and dissemination. This indicates that the media, the government, and other information experts should establish enough awareness and increase the abilities of the general population in order to better recognise false news. These initiatives must to be expanded to reach the majority of people living in rural areas in Nigeria by way of civil society organisations. At the grassroots level in Nigeria, members of civil society organisations should take it upon themselves to raise awareness of the dangers presented by fake news and the importance of digital literacy. When it comes to dealing with fabricated news, they should also be champions for community-centered standards and principles.

As a last point, media and digital literacy should be included in Nigeria's standard curriculum for students of all ages. Librarians, who have traditionally served as information providers, should serve as a source of guidance for both students and faculty members at higher education institutions. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria need to be adequately educated about the dangers of spreading false information if they are to play a meaningful part in the fight against fake news. The tradition of enhancing the customers' information literacy abilities is one that has a long history of being fostered in libraries. In light of this, it is not difficult to see how the phenomenon of false news is only the most recent iteration. In addition, media literacy and information processing skills should be taught in all primary, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria by teachers and lecturers. This would improve students' critical thinking abilities, which is necessary in order to combat the spread of fake news. Because of this, they would be better able to assess information and distinguish between actual and bogus news.

References

1. Abdullahi, B. (2017 March 13). Democracy and the challenge of fake news. TheCable. Retrieved from <https://www.thecable.ng/democracy-challenge-fake-news>.
2. Agbese, D. (2017 December 31). The dangers of fake news. Daily Trust. Retrieved January 26, 2021 from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/the-dangers-of-fake-news.html>.
3. Allcott, H. & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211–236.
4. Anaeto, S. G., Onabajo, O. S. & Osifeso, J. B. (2008). *Models and theories of communication*. African Renaissance Books Incorporated.
5. Azlan, A. (2012). Content analysis of crisis communicative strategies: Tunisian protest vs. anti-Mubarak protest. *International Journal of Human Sciences*, 9(2), 22-39.
6. Barthel, M., Mitchell, A. & Holcomb, J. (2016). Many Americans believe fake news is sowing confusion. file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/PJ_2016.12.15_fake-news_FINAL.pdf.
7. Boykoff, J. (2011). The tea party movement, framing, and the US media. *Social Movement Studies Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest*, 22(3), 341-466.

8. Callaghan, K. & Schnell, K. (2005). *Framing American politics*. University of Pittsburg.
9. Daramola, I. (2013). Ethnic consideration in political coverage by Nigerian media. *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2(12), 38-52.
10. Davies, P. E. (1995). Use of propaganda in civil war: The Biafran experience. Available from www.wikipedia.com/use_of_propaganda_in_civil_War.
11. Egan, J. (2018 December 11). We need writers now more than ever. Our democracy depends on it. TIME magazine. Retrieved from <http://time.com/5475490/writers-truth-democracy-jennifer-egan/>
12. Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward a clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 4(8), 51-58.
13. Epstein, R. A. (2011). Direct democracy: Government of the people, by the people and for the people. *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*, 34, 819-826.
14. Gamson, W. A. (1992). *Talking politics*. Cambridge University Press.
15. Gonzalez, M. J. (2013). Media propaganda: A framing analysis of radio broadcasts from the U.S. to Cuba. A Master of Arts thesis, Department of Mass Communications, College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida. Available from <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5691&context=etd>.
16. Hankey, S., Marrison, J. K., & Naik, R. (2018). Data and democracy in the digital age. The Constitution Society.
17. Harsin, J. (2018). Post-truth and critical communication studies. In J. Nussbaum (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedias: Communication* (pp.1-33). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.757>.
18. Ibrahim, A. M., & Adamu, M. A. (2016). ICT is not gender blind: A literary analysis of ICT gender inequality and its socio-economic impact in the developing world. In J. Wilson & N. D. Gapsiso, (Eds.), *Overcoming gender inequalities through technology integration* (pp. 174-193). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-9773-7.ch009>.
19. Iruonagbe, T. C., Imhonopi, D. & Ahmadu, F. O. (2013). A conceptual review of mass media and political violence in Nigeria between 1999 and 2013. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 20; 12-20.
20. Itedge News (2018 September 10). Nigeria goes after fake news, hate speech as NBC reviews broadcasting code. Itedge News. Retrieved from <https://itedgenews.ng/2018/09/10/nigeria-goes-fake-news-hate-speech-nbc-reviews-broadcasting-code/>.
21. Kuypers, J. A. (2002). *Press bias and politics: How the media frame controversial issues*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
22. Lawrence, R. (2000). Game-framing the issues: Tracking the strategy frame in public policy news. *Political Communication*, 2(3); 93-114.
23. Matthes, J. (2011). Framing politics: An integrative approach. *The American Behavioral scientist*, 2(4), 247-259.
24. McGonagle, T. (2017). "Fake news" False fears or real concerns? *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, 35(4), 203-209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0924051917738685>.
25. Minahan, J. (2002). *Encyclopedia of the stateless nations: S-Z*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
26. Moyes, N. B. & Erskine, S. O. (1984). *Journalism*. Lexington, Ginn & Company.
27. Nasidi, Q. Y. (2016). Media and ethics: Journalism ethics in Nigerian news media. *Journal*

- of *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 21(12), 1-6.
28. Ngoa, N. (2011). A review & analytical narrative of propaganda activities: A Nigerian perspective. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(16), 237-248.
29. Okoro, E. M., Abara, B. A., Umagba, A. O., Ajonye, A. A., & Isa, M. S. (2018). A hybrid approach to fake news detection on social media. *Nigerian Journal of Technology*, 37(2), 454-462. <https://doi.org/10.4314/njt.v37i2.22>.
30. Omaka, A. O. (2017). Conquering the home front: Radio Biafra in the Nigeria-Biafra war. *SAGE Journals*, 25(4), 555-575.
31. Omego, C. U. & Nwachukwu, F. G. (2013). *Foundation of mass communication (Revised Edition)*. University of Port Harcourt Press.
32. Oro, O. I. (2011). The Nigerian press: The journey so far. *Continental Journal of Sustainable Development*, 2(1), 8-19.
33. Pate, U. A. (2018 September 7). Fake news, Hate Speech and Nigeria's Democratic Sustenance. PowerPoint slides of a presentation at a colloquium to mark the Press Week of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Plateau State Chapter, Jos, pp. 6-10.
34. Pate, U. A., & Idris, H. (2017). How Journalists survived to report: Professionalism and risk management in the reporting of terror groups and violent extremism in North East Nigeria. In U. Carlsson & R. Pöyhtäri, (Eds.), *The Assault on Journalism: Building knowledge to protect freedom of expression (pp. 159-170)*. NORDICOM University of Gothenburg, p. 161.
35. Pate, U. A., Gambo, D. & Ibrahim, A. M. (2019). The impact of fake news and the emerging post-truth political era on Nigerian polity: A review of literature. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 7(1), 21-29.
36. Sambe, J. A. (2005). *Introduction to mass communication practice in Nigeria*. Spectrum Books.
37. Scheufele, D. & Iyengar S. (2010). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103-122.
38. Shaibu, S. A. (2005). *Total experience in broadcasting*. Awomo Publishers.
39. Shuck, A. R. T. & De Vreese, C. H. (2006). Between risk and opportunity news framing and its effects on public support for EU engagement. *European Journal of Communication*, Available from <http://ejc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/>.
40. Wasserman, H., & Madrid-Morales, D. (2018 November 21). Study sheds light on scourge of "fake news" in Africa. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/study-shed-light-on-scurge-of-fake-news-in-africa-106946>.
41. Weaver, D., McCombs, M. & Shaw, D. L. (2004). Agenda-setting research: Issues, attributes, and influences. In L. L. Kaid (Ed.) *Handbook of political communication Research*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.